

Statement from the Kingdom of Bahrain on the Recent Convictions of 21 Protesters

MANAMA (June 23, 2011)-- On Wednesday, the Military Prosecutor in Bahrain's Lower National Safety Court announced that 21 individuals had been convicted of plotting to violently topple Bahrain's government, inciting violence, destroying property and passing forward sensitive intelligence information to a terrorist organization in a foreign country.

Nawaf Almuawdah, a government spokesperson stressed Bahrain's commitment to a transparent and fair judicial process but noted that no country could tolerate armed protestors seeking to violently overthrow the government.

"Democracy and the rule of law are not new concepts for Bahrain. Historically, Bahrain's judicial system has ranked amongst the most transparent and advanced in the Middle East. The government commitment to these core precepts is unshakeable. But so is our commitment to keeping peace on our streets and maintaining public safety," he said.

Almuawdah noted that protests in Bahrain began peacefully, but distinguished those convicted of crimes as individuals that participated in violent demonstrations aimed at threatening public order and security.

"Measured dissent is a byproduct of any healthy democracy and Bahrainis have engaged in free expression of all views and opinions. The protests which started in February began peacefully and those who called for legitimate reform were welcomed. The government is committed to working with these individuals and their counterparts in our forthcoming National Dialogue in order to make progress on legitimate political change and social welfare," he explained.

"However, no sovereign country can be expected to tolerate violence against the government. Those individuals who stand accused have committed credible wrongdoing. They conspired with foreign terrorist organizations and attacked state police. They blocked roads, access to public facilities, destroyed property, and closed off the financial harbour which systematically brought the national economy to the edge of collapse. The government cannot and will not stand for those who call for violence and attempt to destroy the very fabric of Bahrain's society. Under our legal system each accused individual has been afforded the right to due process and a fair, transparent trial," he continued.

"The outcome of these trials cannot distract us from our ultimate goal and the government has been unwavering and unrelenting in its call for a comprehensive National Dialogue, since February. The forthcoming talks will be an important opportunity for all sides to reconcile and settle political differences. We must work together towards a stronger, brighter future for a democratic Bahrain," Almuawdah concluded.

The defendants have been tried in National Safety Courts presided over by two civilian judges and one military judge. All defendants have had access to legal council and the full breadth of rights guaranteed to all Bahrainis under its progressive, transparent legal

system. These rights include the ability to appeal the issued verdicts within fifteen days of their being handed down.

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Source: Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain
Contact: Matt Lauer
Phone: 703-463-1841

This has been issued by Qorvis Communications on behalf of the Kingdom of Bahrain.
Additional information may be found by contacting the Department of Justice,
Washington, DC.

2011 JUL 28 FRI 9:31

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bahrain transfers security cases to civilian courts

MANAMA -- June 26, 2011 -- All cases that have yet to be tried in national safety courts have been transferred to civilian jurisdiction, Bahrain's Minister of Human Rights and Social Development announced.

"We welcome the decision to transfer the cases of the deplorable incidents to regular courts," Her Excellency, Minister Fatima Al Beloushi said in an interview with Gulf Daily News. "Such a step is a strong indication of Bahrain's keenness on applying the highest rights and legal standards."

While both the lower national safety court and the national safety court of appeals were established to deal with extraordinary cases following the unrest that began in February 2011, Her Excellency, Minister Al Beloushi noted that a return normalcy necessitated a transition back to regular courts.

"Now that the situation is back to normal, the transfer of the remaining cases to the regular courts is the natural thing to do," she said.

This decision comes one week before the beginning of the comprehensive National Dialogue on July 1.

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Media Contact: Matt Lauer, (703) 463-1841

This release has been issued by Qorvis Communications on behalf of the Kingdom of Bahrain. For more information please contact the US Department of Justice.